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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S MAY 22 MEETING WITH HUMAN RIGHTS  
OMBUDSMAN LUKIN  
  
REF: MOSCOW 5377

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns, for reasons 1.4 (B & D).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request - see paragraph 7.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY. Ambassador met May 22 with Human Rights Ombudsman Vladimir Lukin, who will visit New York and Washington May 23-26 (reftel). Lukin said President Putin had encouraged him to visit the U.S. to expand the bilateral dialogue on human rights. On other issues, he said that his office's recently released human rights report had been relatively well received so far in Russia and that it was too soon to tell about implementation of the NGO law. Lukin is a relatively fair observer of Russia's human rights situation, and we recommend that Department assist him to the extent possible in getting high-level appointments during his trip.  
END SUMMARY.

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LUKIN'S U.S. MEETINGS  
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[1](#)3. (C) Lukin said he looked forward to his May 23-26 visit to Washington and New York. President Putin, as well as Presidential Aide Sergey Prikhodko and Security Council head Igor Ivanov, had encouraged him to take that trip even though the atmosphere might be difficult. Well acquainted with Washington from his tenure as ambassador in the early 1990s, Lukin hoped to meet with many contacts from the USG, Congress, think tanks, and the media. Thus far, few meetings had been confirmed, Lukin continued, and he asked for the Department's help. In Washington, Lukin hoped to meet with Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rice, Deputy Secretary Zoellick, NSA Stephen Hadley, House Speaker Hastert, and Senators Lugar, Obama, Lieberman, Biden, and Hagel, among others. In New York, he said he hoped to meet with former President Bill Clinton, Henry Kissinger, and Rabbi Arthur Schneier.

[1](#)4. (C) Lukin said he saw the trip as especially important given the current difficult mood in both Moscow and Washington. Lukin said that Russia was trying to maintain a balance between a strong government and a solid base for building democracy. He compared the situation in Russia in the 1990s with the period in U.S. history that was replete with corruption, back-room deals, and robber-barons. He said Russia did not want to return to such chaos. On the other hand, there are real human rights and other political and social problems in Russia right now that must be addressed.

[1](#)5. (C) Lukin said he wanted to make the trip to help minimize misunderstanding and increase the bilateral dialogue. He mentioned the interest he raised before with Washington interlocutors to create a more structured dialogue regarding human rights issues. The Ambassador responded that there was definite interest in Washington about the idea and that

contacts in Washington were looking forward to developing the idea with him.

REACTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT AND NGO LAW

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¶6. (C) Lukin said reaction to his office's annual human rights report had been good so far -- no one said it was too critical or not critical enough of the current situation in Russia. He said the report aimed for a calm, balanced tone but also one that would be critical of human rights abuses. In terms of the NGO law, he said the situation was quiet and that only one incident -- a court case against the Union of Immigrants, whose head is a member of his office's Expert Council -- had raised concerns so far. Lukin said he had tried to intervene on behalf of that NGO with the Justice Ministry but was told it was too late in the process. Ministry officials had assured him, however, that the outcome would not harm the NGO. As it subsequently turned out, the case was dismissed by the court. He said he did not know how strong a precedent the case would set, but insisted the NGO law was no worse than similar laws in Western countries. He said it was not a good idea to raise the alarm too often when nothing has happened and cited the example of "the boy who cried wolf." Lukin offered to discuss the NGO law during his meetings in the U.S. He also repeated his determination to keep a careful eye on implementation of the NGO law.

¶7. (C) Action request: As reftel noted, Lukin has been a fair observer of the human rights situation in Russia and an excellent interlocutor. We recommend that the Department do its best to arrange the meetings he has requested.

BURNS